

## **R.W. – 1**

### On The Memphis Riot

The following is an account of the riot which occurred here in Memphis on Thursday ;ast. March 28. 1968. This account was forwarded to me by a Le Moyne College student who was on the scene and took an active part in what went on.

The person from whom I received this information seems to think that the violence which erupted from what was to have been a peaceful march was pre-planned. He, this student, had been informed of the plans. The march was late getting started. This delay was due to the late arrival of Dr. Martin Luther King. Dr. King, who was to have led the march, did not arrive to the point at which the march was scheduled to have begun until after 11:00 a.m. The march was scheduled to have begun at 9:30 a.m. By the time Dr. King arrived, the marchers, many of whom were radical young high school and college students were impatient and restless. When Dr. King arrived he met an unruly mob rather than an organized group of peaceful marchers.

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## **R.W. – 2**

By this time, as it was reported on the news, the march had been taken over by the militants.

I was told that an organized group of these so-called radicals had planned for the violence to start when the march reached the corner of Main and Madison. This plan was organized such that the window smashing and looting and fire bomb throwing would wreck the establishments of the city's most noted merchants, including Jack Goldsmith and Julius (illegible). If this plan had been carried out, the radicals believe that pragmatism of the elite white society would at length make Mayor Loeb yield in his senseless stand on the issue. But as it were, the young unorganized hot-heads largely the high school folk, tore up Beale Street. This act, to a large degree, killed the purpose of the riot. "Mayor Loeb," I was told, "does not give a damn what happens to those Jews on Beale."

The young men to whom I spoke seemed to be of the opinion that the Memphis Police Department did a commendable job of putting down the riot. He thought that even though one Negro youth was killed unnecessarily that the police used a great deal of restraint. Considering that they not only dealt with looters, window smashers, and fire-bomb throwers, but were often the targets of

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## **R.W. – 3**

The person with whom I spoke thinks that if people who charged them, the police, with overreacting had been in the position of the policeman, they'd not have reacted as effectively.

I was told that the riots imperiled the establishments of non-Negro merchants all over the city. He related an incident of a Chinese grocer in the North Memphis Negro community who was concerned

about saving his store from damages. I was told that the grocers' children go to school with Negroes. The Negroes had told those kids that if the words "Soul Brother" had been written on the windows of any establishment, the establishment would be passed over by the firebombers and looters, as had been done in the Detroit riots. The Chinese, not completely understanding, instead wrote upon the window the words "Me Nigger" and his store was turned Thursday night and its remains were burned Friday night.